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# THE REFORMED THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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THE
REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Vol. XVIII FEBRUARY, 1959 No. 1

## Amos and Israel

A point of vital importance for the understanding of Amos and his message has, it is contended in this paper, been overlooked by the expositors and commentators. Amos differed from all the rest of the so-called writing prophets in that he was not proclaiming the word of Yahweh to his own countrymen. He was speaking to a foreign nation, and faced the kind of situation which we would have to-day if a prophet from Jordan entered Syria to declare a message in the name of Allah to his northern neighbours — two different kingdoms, of the same national type, speaking the same language, worshipping the same God, but differing fundamentally in politics and separated by clashing interests.

Of course, prophets often spoke oracles concerning other nations; but, unless we regard the book of Jonah as actual history, they never entered the territory of the foreigners to conduct a prophetic mission. They never spoke face to face with them as Amos did. Perhaps the nearest approach to Amos's boldness of action is to be found in the forty-seventh chapter of Isaiah, although there we cannot be sure of the actual political situation.

Unfortunately, we lack information about the relations between Israel and Judah during the period of the divided Kingdom. We know little concerning freedom of communication and travel between the two countries. According to the Biblical accounts, Jeroboam I took action to make the cleavage complete between North and South, even going so far as to set up in Bethel and Dan a rival cult to that practised at Jerusalem — a cult with its own priests and religious festivals. The work of pre-writing prophets like Elijah and Elisha was centred in Israel. Whatever we may make of the story in I Kings 13 of the prophet of Judah who went up to Bethel to denounce the altar set up by Jeroboam, it is clear enough that he had a hostile reception by the Israelite king, and, from the sequel, by a prophet

of the northern Kingdom. So far as I know this prophet was the only one besides Amos who intruded with set purpose into the territory of Israel from the south.

I.

The first point to be made, then, is that Amos is the only "writing" prophet who spoke to a nation not his own. The commentators and the expositors of his message do not seem to have taken this fact into consideration. A. C. Welch goes so far as to say that Amos went to Israel with the consciousness that both nations were one people, "bound together by the ties of a common heritage and a common destiny." Yet it is noticeable that, except for the two occasions in chapter 7 where he intercedes for Jacob, i.e., the Northern people, there is not a trace of evidence that he regarded them as his people or that he recognised his unity with them. He seems to have isolated himself from his audience and to have spoken as an outsider in no way involved in the fate he foretold for them. Contrast this attitude with that of Hosea, himself a Northerner, agonising over the sin of his people, revealing the love of God hurt by His children's faithlessness, wistful for their repentance and pardon and glad over their restoration. It is not enough to explain the difference in the temper of these two books of prophecy by pointing to a difference in the temperaments of the prophets — Amos, the hard, unbending upholder of a rigorous moral law; and Hosea, the one whose heart had been softened and made compassionate by his own suffering. Surely the explanation is that Hosea was involved with his own people and Amos was not.

II.

The second point is this: the recognition that Amos is speaking to a nation not his own explains difficulties which have long troubled the commentators. Let us take the following points as examples:—

1. Three references to Judah in the prophecy are recognised as difficulties. The first is Amos 1:2: "Yahweh roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem." In his *Theology of the Old Testament* (p. 261) Edmond Jacob expresses some surprise that Amos, "apparently detached from all cultic preoccupations, asserts that Yahweh makes his voice heard from Jerusalem." Is not the explanation simply this: for a Judean the natural place to locate the dwelling-place of Yahweh from which He will make His judgment known is Jerusalem where His house is, and where He sits enthroned? In spite of Jacob's contention that 'all the prophets agree in declaring that

there is a particular and permanent bond between Yahweh and the temple,' this is not true of Hosea; and Hosea was an Israelite of the Northern Kingdom.

The second reference to Judah is in chapter 2:4, 5 which brings Judah within the circle of the nations which are judged and condemned for 'three transgressions and for four.' Some who would retain the oracle in the text say it would be necessary for Amos to include Judah within the group of offending nations in order to complete it. But would it? Amos is speaking to Israel as a foreign nation which is judged like other foreign nations. Add to this the usual ground for regarding this oracle as a later insertion, viz., that the sins for which Judah is condemned are not in the same category as those of the foreign nations — crimes against a common humanity — but are general and confined to religious defalcations, and the case against the genuineness of the oracle is complete.

The third reference is in chapter 6:1, 'Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria.' It is held that parallelism demands the retention of Zion, and that it would be natural for Amos to condemn the false security of the grandees of Jerusalem. Is this sound reasoning? Why drag in the wealthy idle in Jerusalem at all? It is not his own nation which occupies the prophet's attention, but the foreign nation of Israel. Is not the reference to Zion to be explained as the alteration of those who preserved the oracles of Amos in the South, and wanted to make this particular oracle applicable to the careless and confident men in Judah? Note how the passage runs on with complete exclusion of anything to show that Judah or Jerusalem is in the prophet's mind at all. Surely we are justified in following Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* and reading for Zion, Beth Yisrael or, preferably, Bethel.

2. A second difficulty which commentators have encountered in dealing with Amos is his use of the name Yahweh, the peculiar name of the God of the Hebrews. Like all the prophets this name is always upon his lips. It is Yahweh whose word he proclaims; it is Yahweh Himself who speaks through His prophet. In this comparatively short book the name occurs at least seventy times, but not once is Yahweh called the God of Israel. He is simply Yahweh, or Yahweh of hosts, or Yahweh is His name. It looks as if Amos is deliberately refusing to say that Yahweh is the God of Northern Israel. Even though three or four times he represents Yahweh as saying 'my people Israel,' he, himself, refrains from calling them

that. If Amos thinks of Israel as a foreign nation, he thinks of it as having forfeited the right to the name of Yahweh as its God. This gives point to a later saying: 'are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel, says Yahweh.'

3. But it is Amos's view of the future of Israel that is determined by the fact that for him it is a foreign nation — no longer Yahweh's. It is the contention of this paper that so far as this nation is concerned Amos is a 'no-hoper.' Its end is destruction. That can be seen in many places, but particularly in (1) Chapter 8:2 — the vision of the basket of summer fruit. 'And Yahweh said, Amos, what are you seeing? And I said, A basket of summer fruit *(qaits)*. Then Yahweh said to me, The end *(qets)* has come upon my people Israel; I will never pass them by them again.' There is nothing eschatalogical in this word *qets*. Coming from the root *qatsats* to cut, it signifies the end of life — finish. (2) Chapter 9:1-4, 8ab. This records the vision of the Lord standing beside the altar in judgment and bringing down the roof of the sanctuary upon the heads of the worshippers, pursuing them relentlessly wherever they flee in panic; and it ends with the ominous words: 'Behold the eyes of the Lord Yahweh are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth.' How lame and unconvincing and contrary to the whole message of Amos are the words which have been added later in order to tone down the absoluteness of this threat, 'Saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith Yahweh'! According to Amos there will be nothing left over with which to build again.

This raises the question of the Remnant. It is often said that Amos has a doctrine of the Remnant, and that he is in agreement with all the other prophets. In these days when the study of Biblical Theology is insistent on the unity of the Scriptures, and especially the unity as it concerns the growing revelation of God's saving purpose in history, there is strong hostility to the idea that any one of the prophets can stand outside of that unity. So attempts are made to prove that Amos is orthodox in this respect, and attention is drawn to Amos 2:12: 'Thus saith Yahweh, As a shepherd rescues out of the mouth of a lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued.' All that is left is a couple of shin bones and a bit of an ear — just enough to prove that the animal whose miserable remains have been snatched from the jaws of the lion was a sheep. What Amos is saying is that all that

will survive of the Northern Kingdom is a pitiable handful, a proof that there once existed a proud nation called Israel. If this can be called a doctrine of a Remnant, those who claim that Amos conforms to a pattern are welcome to it.

The root *sha'ar* from which the noun *she'erith* (remnant) comes occurs five times in Amos, viz., 1:8 (remnant of the Philistines); the verb *tash'ir* twice in 5:3 (of decimation of a city); 5:15 (the remnant of Joseph); 9:12 (the remnant of Edom). The only possible basis for a doctrine of the Remnant is 5:15; but it is very tentative — 'it *may be* that Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph,' and it seems to be negated by verses 16 and 17. The passage at the end of the book is not from Amos. Verses 11-15 of chapter 9 refer to the Judean remnant and its future.

The plain truth is that Amos can hold out no hope for Israel. It has forfeited its right to be reckoned as part of the people of Yahweh. It is expendable, outside of Yahweh's purpose. Only a foreigner, standing outside of the nation, could assert this so absolutely. Contrast this attitude of Amos with that of Hosea, who was himself a Northerner and who, consequently, could not bring himself to believe that Yahweh would finally reject Israel. History has vindicated Amos. The Northern Kingdom vanished, never again to have a part, except that of a warning example, in the continuing story of the divine purpose for the world.

As an interesting postscript, it is worth noting how small a part the call to repentance has in the preaching of Amos. It is to be found only in chapter 5. 'Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be with you as you have claimed.' For the rest Amos declared that the time for repentance was past, and only doom lay ahead. Note the repetition of the phrase 'Yet you did not turn back to me, says Yahweh.' The climax comes in chapter 4:12. 'Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.' Again contrast Hosea's attitude to these same people not many years after Amos spoke to them. He pictures Yahweh as agonising over the nation, and hears Him say: 'How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? . . . My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy.' (Hosea

11:8, 9.) Is the difference between the two men a matter of temperament? Or is the difference explained by the fact that one belongs to the people, and the other is outside them, a foreigner?

H. MACLEAN.

## The Authority of the Confession

*The Barthian and the Reformed View*

It is an undeniable fact that the problem of the authority of the confession is one of the most vexing problems for the Churches of our days. The reason is that the problem of the confession is anything but a theoretical problem, on which one can have a discussion without any obligation. This would be the case if it was a purely historical matter only, a matter of defining our attitude towards a venerable document of the past. In this case, too, there might be considerable differences of appreciation, but it would only be differences of degree, and the final decision could be left to the subjective taste and feeling of each individual concerned.

In actual fact, however, the situation is quite different. The confession has to do with the very heart of the Church's life. For *the problem of the confession is ultimately the problem of the preaching of the Church.* We are faced here with the question: Who is going to define the preaching of the Church? The Church herself? Or is it the individual preacher?

In general, three attitudes can be distinguished.

The *first* is that of *factual doctrinal liberty.* This attitude was defended by many theologians of the previous century and also of the beginning of this century. It does not mean, that the confession was fully discarded, but its interpretation was completely left to the individual preacher. In some cases it was even officially stated that the confession was of a binding nature, but in reality this was only a formal matter. This binding character was so drastically limited (e.g., the confession is only binding as to its "spirit and essence"), that in actual fact it was without any effect. Moreover, the definition of this "spirit and essence" was again left to the individual preacher. Others, and not without right and reason, went further and openly declared that the confession is not binding at all. For example, Prof. Kenneth Edwards of St. Andrew's College in Sydney, though acknowledging the necessity of Creeds, fully accepted free and personal interpretation of the confession for each minister. He wrote: "It is the minister's right and duty to interpret the present standards

in the light of such knowledge and such Christian experience as he has been led to by a reverent and careful study of the Word of God under the guidance of the holy Spirit."[1]

Without exaggeration it can be said that in our days this view has generally been abandoned by the leading theologians (though not by all!). And this is no wonder, for here the Church fully gives up her own responsibility. She completely leaves the preaching to the arbitrariness of the individual preacher. Like Pilate, she washes her hands in innocence, though it does not avail her any more than it availed Pilate. Here the Church becomes a debating-club (Barth). The Church is not a confessional Church any more, but she is not a confessing Church either. She is nobody's land and everybody's land. Just as in the days of the Judges: Every man did what was good in his own eyes.

Diametrically opposed to this first view is the *second* attitude. It is the attitude of those who hold that the confession of the Church is *strictly binding* for all those, who belong to the Church, whether ministers or members.

The Church has to maintain her confession, because in the confession she openly has said: This, according to us, is the truth of the Word of God. If the Church really means this, and it must be supposed that this is so, then there is but one possibility, namely, to maintain the confession.

This does not mean that therefore the confession is equated with the Word of God itself. Every equation has always been denied emphatically. The confession is and remains a human writing, and as a human writing it is of a fallible character. Therefore the way to raise objections must always be open and alterations must always be possible, as actually they have happened more than once. But as long as no gravamen has been put forward, the confession has to be maintained, and all the preaching of and in the Church has to be in accordance with the confession.

This second view is the view of all confessional Churches.

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Many in our days reject both views mentioned above. They emphatically repudiate an absolute doctrinal liberty, because they fully understand that here the Church abandons her responsibility and that the end of this way is the blind alley of purely subjectivistic arbitrariness.

1. K. Edwards, **The Creeds and the Living Church, 1934, pp. 21-22.**

But they also refuse to give the confession a binding position in the Church. According to them the historical confession of the Church is overestimated in this way.

The typical exponent, not to say the originator of this view, is *Karl Barth.* Barth has understood very well that in the confession we have to do with the *preaching of the Church.* And in fact this preaching of the Church is the great concern of Barth in all his voluminous works. Time and again he repeats the thesis, that Church proclamation has to be in agreement with the revelation attested in Holy Scripture. The Church in her proclamation is neither an independent, nor a final authority. The Church cannot speak on her own. She is only a subordinate authority, an authority under the Word of God and inasfar as her proclamation agrees with the Word of God.

In this connection Barth also deals with the *Dogma* of the Church. Actually he uses the word dogma in a twofold sense. First in the *singular,* and then he means this agreement of the Church proclamation with the revelation attested in Holy Scripture. Dogma is not primarily a certain formulated truth of faith, but it first of all is a concept of relation,[2] and only arising from this dogma there are the dogmas and dogmatical propositions. This agreement, however, is not something the Church can dispose of at her own pleasure. In particular in opposition to the Roman Catholic conception Barth strongly stresses that this dogma-in-the-singular is a fully *eschatological* concept. The dogma, after which dogmatics inquires, *is not* the truth of the revelation, but it is *on the way* to the truth of revelation. The dogma is that which we seek after in all the dogmatical propositions. If we really knew about dogma, if we *had* dogma, then we would know and have the Word of God itself in definite and definitely indicated form. And this certainly will happen one day, but not before the Kingdom of God has come. If we assert that we have this dogma hic et nunc already, we are guilty of an unwarranted theologia gloriae.

Besides this primary concept of dogma in the singular Barth also speaks of dogmas in the *plural,* that means of doctrinal propositions, or confessions. He gives the follow *definition:* "A Church confession is a formulation and proclamation of the insight which the Church has been given in certain directions into the revelation attested by Scripture, reached on the basis of common deliberation and decision."[3] It is not necessary to go deeply into this

2. K. Barth, **Church Dogmatics, I 1, 308.**
3. K. Barth, C.D. I 2, 620.

definition now. As such it certainly is acceptable, though we have to read it of course in the context of the whole Barthian theology, as a result of which some elements and some terms obtain a very definite meaning. So, e.g., the word "attested," in which we find the Barthian view on God's revelation and Holy Scripture. Seen in connection with this context we personally have objections against this word "attested." However, we want now to concentrate upon the aspect of the *Authority*, which Barth ascribes to this confession. Actually he deals twice with this aspect.

The first time, when he is explaining the definition above mentioned, he says that the confession has always the statement of an insight *in definite limits*. There are three sorts of limitations. (a) Geographical limitations — even the General Creeds were thus limited, the Apostles' Creed being more the decision of the West, and the Nicene Creed of the East. (b) Temporal limitations — so we speak of old and new confessions. (c) Material limitations. These find their ground in the fact that to confess is always a matter of reaction. A new conflict or antithesis arises and the Church has to speak anew, i.e., she has to say anew the Yes of the Scriptural exegesis and doctrinal position stated anew, and she also has to say a clear No against the counter-doctrine. This of course involves a material limitation. It means that the confession is not the exposition of a genuinely comprehensive insight, but a result of reaction. Hence not only the parallelisms of the various confessions, but even their contradictions.

Naturally this immediately raises the question: But do these limitations not impair the authority of the confessions? Barth's plain answer is: No, the authority of the confession rests decisively on its limitations.[4] For the limitation is not only an unmistakeable sign of the humanity of the confession, but it is also the concrete form of the obedience of the drafters. The Word and Will of God is behind it. It was Holy Scripture speaking to the Church, which at this or that time and place imparted to different people their definite measure of the Spirit and of faith; blessing, but also judging; spreading light, but also darkness according to the free and right and perfect will of God. That is why there are necessarily so many confessions in the Church. That is why these confessions are so different and even contradictory.[5] Barth works out this "spreading light and darkness" thus: A confession may even have the character of a document of the wrath and judgment and reaction of God and therefore that of a

4. Id. 634.
5. Id. 635.

negative authority, of a document that warns the Church away, because it is the codification of heresy and falsehood. But there is also the possibility that we see in this document, over and above these things, God's sin-forgiving grace and therefore a definite perception of the truth. And so the confession has authority, right in the middle of its limitations.[6]

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The second time that Barth speaks of the authority of the confession is at the end of the discussion of his own definition.[7] He begins by stating that a confession drawn up by the Church has ecclesiastical authority. Emphatically he asserts that we can never ignore its binding and imperative and authoritative character. In the Church we happen to have fathers behind us and brothers beside us, and we therefore have a definite responsibility to their definite decisions. But how far does this binding and imperative and authoritative character reach? Has it anything to do with *Church law?* Barth fully admits that the above-mentioned responsibility can be confirmed and codified in Church law. But he immediately adds, that it does not arise because a corresponding decision is made in Church law. Nor may it be annulled or even weakened by a failure or flouting of that law. For the real authority of the confession is a *spiritual* authority. That is, it is based on its character as correct exposition of Scripture. As such it is self-attesting authority to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away by Church law.[8] The authority of the confession is never decided by any outward legitimation, but by its own importance, by the perception confessed in it. So the fact that the General Creeds or the Confessions of the Reformation are not assured by Church law, does not prevent them from speaking and being heard in our days.

What, however, does this mean for our practical attitude towards the confessions? How then have we to *use* the confession? The answer is: We have to read and study it seriously and constantly, because it is meant as a *first commentary* on Holy Scripture and wants to be such. No one has ever read the Bible with his own eyes only and no one ever should do this. Yet we cannot stop here. After having read them we have to go and tread our own way in the understanding, exposition, and explication of Holy Scripture. The confession cannot and

6. Id. 625-637.
7. Id. 647-660.
8. Id. 647-48.

will not deprive us of our own responsibility to Scripture. But we shall enter that way "confessionally determined." That means: We take the *direction* indicated by the confession. (If we cannot do this, we have to seek for another confession.[9])

On purpose Barth chooses here the word "direction." For he rejects the idea that we should be bound to the particular theology of the confession and to all the details of its Biblical expositon. According to Barth we can be loyal to the direction of the confession and still think that in detail and even as a whole we would rather have put it otherwise. We have to pursue our own way of understanding the Bible. We cannot allow ourselves to be bound by the confession as by a law. This does not at all annihilate the authority of the confession. For besides the authority of the law and the lack of all authority, there is yet a third form: *spiritual* authority. If we think that to be insufficient, we would distrust the power of the Holy Spirit. If we would give it more authority, if we would elevate it to the rank of revelation or a law, we would bring ourselves back to Roman Catholicism, with all its disastrous consequences.

So we have to distinguish between the *direction* of the confession and its detailed *statements*. It may be that the statements are directed against persons and errors, which are no longer familiar to the Church of our days (though the unity between the heresies of every age and place should not be under-estimated!). But primarily and decisively it is not the wording of a Church confession nor its form as geographically and temporally and historically limited, but its direction (which is of course only real and recognisable in its concrete statements and form), whose exposition can constitute the necessary horizon of the present-day Church, and as such have authority.[10] It may even be that we in learning the direction from the confession have to oppose critically certain or even many of its statements. This criticism does not at all affect the respect we owe to the confession. And then Barth takes yet another step. Even if there is no cause to oppose the statements of the confession directly, yet they have at all points extensively to be interpreted. They have to be read with underlinings and emphases and accentuations, which they never had then, which they do not have when considered "historically," but which they necessarily acquire, when they are the antithesis and the horizon of the

9. Id. 650.
10. Id. 655.

present-day Church. This, too, does not impair the authority, for the confession only wants to direct us to Scripture.[11]

Barth calls this the *complete freedom* with which we have to accept the statements of the confession. He describes this freedom as follows: We accept them as our own statements in the sense and understanding in which they have now imposed themselves upon us as true, with the reservations in respect of earlier interpretations (perhaps even of the original understanding), which are the necessary result of our own relation to Holy Scripture, but all the same as the confession of our own faith. According to Barth this was also the attitude of the Reformers and especially of the Reformed Churches of the 16th century, as proof of which he adduces some examples.[12]

His own *final conclusion* is: The authority of the confession is only a relative one. Every confession is but a stage on the road to *the* Dogma, the infallible Dogma, which is an eschatological quantity, for the final and unalterable confession is the praise which the Church as the body eternally united to its Head will offer to its Lord in this its own eternal consummation.[13]

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When we now try to give an *evaluation* of Barth's view, we will start by expressing our deep *appreciation* for the positive way in which he approaches the confessions of the Church. How different is here the climate, compared to that created by the 19th century *Modernism!* Modernism in its subjectivism and individualism did not have any appreciation for the idea of authority in the Church. Rejecting Christ as the unique revelation of God and therefore the Bible as the unique testimony of this revelation it was left with its own human thought about God. Looking upon the Church as a coetus( an association of pious men) instead of a congregation (a new people gathered by Christ) it did not know how to ascribe any authority to the speaking of this Church. The final authority was with the individual believer, who had to build his faith upon his own discoveries and upon his own experiences. In other words: It was purely anthropocentric. To this Modernism Barth speaks a round and definite No. Emphatically he points to the complete dependence of the Church in her speaking upon the Word of God, which is

11. Id. 656.
12. Id. 658.
13. Id. 657.

decisively authoritative. In this regard Barth has not any appreciation for Modernism. He dismisses it with these crushing words: "It has not had the confidence seriously and consistently to lay before the Church the challenge even of a confession of the non-confessionalism, which it has taught and demanded. . . . As is well known, it has never done more than obscure the old confession theologically."[14]

But Modernism is not Barth's greatest enemy. He considers *Roman Catholicism* as a far more dangerous adversary and therefore he opposes it continually. For in Roman Catholicism Barth sees how man has mastered God's revelation. Here the Church is not under the Word of God, but above the Word. Here dogma is not the attempt of the Church to speak in agreement with the Word of God, but dogma itself is equated with revelation. Over against this hybris Barth maintains the absolute and sovereign freedom of God in his revelation. Never can man, even a believing man, master it.

As to these points Barth's position is gladdening indeed. In these regards he truly moves along the lines designed by the Reformers. It is also largely through his works that nowadays we can observe everywhere a new respect for and attention to the confession. Especially among the younger theologians of our day a new interest in what the Church throughout the ages has proclaimed as the truth revealed by God, has been aroused. Dogmatics itself from being a despised and rather obscure maid-servant has come to the fore again. Yet we feel necessitated to make some *critical remarks* concerning the further details of Barth's view. Especially Barth's view on the authority of the confessions seems to be unsatisfactory.

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Barth indeed ascribes a certain, even a great authority to the confessions. We observe that with great appreciation. Emphatically he states that the confession has not only a meaning from below, but also from above,[15] and with this we agree. We also agree when he says that this authority is not broken down by the above-mentioned limitations of the confession. But then, as we have seen, Barth goes on and says that the Word of God imposes these limitations and that it was Holy Scripture that spreads light and darkness according to the free will of God. In our opinion it would be better to speak here of human sinfulness as the cause of the darkness. Of course

14. Id. 660.
15. Id. 635.

even the darkness does not occur without the will of God, which is "free and right and perfect," but this does not allow us to ascribe the darkness to the will of God as the real cause. Likewise Barth's speaking of a "negative authority" with regard to erring confessions would seem to be out of order. The word authority does not hold here, at least not in the same sense in which Barth speaks of the spiritual authority of the true confession. A wrong confession is not authoritative, but only and at most a warning. The word authority can only be used where the confession is in agreement with the Word of God. This agreement is the basis of the authority, it actually is the authority itself.

Another point which we also appreciate is Barth's strong emphasis on the *spiritual* character of this authority. Indeed this is the strength and power of the confession: its authority based on its character as correct exposition of Scripture.[16] Here again Barth is a true son of the Reformation. It was the common view of all the Reformers that the confession derives its authority from its being in agreement with the Scriptures. The confession derives its authority not from an immanent, independent, and inherent authority of the Church, but from the authority of God's own Word. We also heartily agree with Barth, when he asserts that this spiritual authority does not arise because a corresponding decision is made in Church law, nor that it is annulled by the failure or flouting of the law. Indeed, nothing can be added nor taken away from the spiritual authority by Church law.

Barth, however, goes on and says then: We cannot allow ourselves to be bound by the confession as by a *law*. Here the spiritual authority and the function of the confession in Church law suddenly become contrasts. With this is connected the fact that Barth does not want to see in the confession more than a first commentary on Holy Scripture and also that he distinguishes between the statements of the confession and its direction. He even says, that it may be necessary to oppose some or even many of its statements.

Here we cannot follow Barth anymore. In our opinion such a view derogates from the earnest intention and character of the confession and of the confessing Church. Has not the Church professed her faith in these words, because it was her firm and earnest conviction: This is the

16. Id. 648.

message of God's Word, of God Himself? The confession is the banner the Church is upholding and on this banner she has written: This is the truth we profess and for which we are ready to lay down our life. Is it then possible that this same Church at the same time says: but we allow deviations from this truth? It is our banner, but at the same time we do not want to be bound to it? Has not the Church to require of at least her ministers, who are ministers of the Divine Word (V.D.M.) and who have to bring the message of God's Word to the Church and to the world, to preach the Word in agreement with this banner, with the commentary of the confession? Does not the spiritual authority demand a confirmation by Church law, in order to show that the Church takes her own confession seriously? Of course the *subscription* does not give authority to the confession. On the contrary, because the confession has this spiritual authority, it is subscribed. This subscription is nothing else than a personal and honest repetition of the confession, an act by which the office-bearer openly proclaims: this is my confession, too. But should not everyone who seeks admittance to the pulpit in his Church be prepared to carry out this act?

The Church cannot and may not leave the proclamation of the Word of God to the arbitrariness of all possible individual interpretations. Otherwise false doctrine may very easily creep into the Church — as history has proved — while the sheep of the flock have not any ecclesiastical protection. It was on the ground of this reality that soon after the breach with Rome in the Churches of the Reformation the custom arose to subscribe to the confession (as it also had been done in the Early Church after the Arian controversies.[17]) All this follows from the fact that the Church has to take her own proclamation of the Word of God seriously and has to watch that the flock does not receive stones instead of bread. It is not difficult to adduce here evidence from Holy Scripture. We mention only: II John 10; Tit. 3:10, 11; Revl. 2:14, 15, 20; Jude 3; I Tim. 3:15, 6:20; Gal. 1:8, and all those places where there is spoken of HOMOLOGIA and DIDACHE and THE FAITH.[18]

All this does not mean that in this way the confession is equated with the Bible and we thus return into the house of bondage of Roman Catholicism. The one and only decisive norm, regula fidei et vitae, remains the Bible. The confession has authority because (quia) and insofar

17. Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, **Early Christian Creeds**, 1950, 204 ff.
18. Cf. Kittel's **Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament**, sub vocibus.

(quatenus) — here is not a contrast, but the one includes the other[19] — the confession is a repetition and reproduction of the message of the revelation by the Church herself. The confession as such and in itself, apart from Holy Scripture has no authority whatsoever. But against the background of scripture and derived from it, it has authority. And if the Church is convinced that her confession is in agreement with Scripture, she has to maintain it. To use Barth's own words: The Church is no debating club. We also could say: It is a matter of moral and spiritual and ecclesiastical cleanliness. If, on the other hand, the Church thinks she cannot maintain her confession in the existing form, then she has to drop it or to alter it. So. e.g., the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in 1905 altered Art. 36 of the Belgic Confession dealing with the relation of Church and State. Only in this way a confession indeed can have authority.

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This has also been the view of the *Reformers*. At the end of his treatment of the confession in *C.D.* I 2 Barth appeals especially to the Reformed Churches, who, according to him, always stated with particular clarity the provisional nature of their confessions and of all confessions. As such this indeed is entirely true. In nearly all the confessions it was stated in some way or other that no human documents, however old and venerable, could stand side by side with Holy Scripture. Reformed theology used to express this by saying that Scripture is norma normans, while the confession is norma normata. Barth however, means that they also, without using the word, were aware of the essentially eschatological nature of true dogma. With this, too, we can agree, if it has not to be interpreted against the special Barthian background of this expression. (With Barth it is connected with his view on the Bible! See below.) That there is a difference between Barth and the Reformed confessions clearly appears, when Barth renders the view of the *Confessio Gallica* which he adduces as the first example, as follows: "We confess the old Church symbols only with the reservation: pource qu'ils sont conformes a la Parole de Dieu" (art. 5). The remarkable thing here is Barth's interpolation of the words: 'only with the reservation.' They are not found in the original! There is no reservation

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19. The "quia" without the "quatenus" means a confessionalistic absolutism, whereby the confession is equated to the Word of God. The "quatenus" without the "quia" makes the confession subject to the personal and individual interpretation of the subscriber.

whatsoever. After first having confessed that the Bible is the Word of God (also without any reservation!) and therefore the rule of all truth, to which no human authority should be opposed, the confession continues: "Et suivant cela nous avouons la troix symboles, savoir: des Apötres, de Nicee, et d'Athanase, parce qu'ils sont conformes a la Parole de Dieu".[20] Exactly the conjunction "parceque" (because) is very significant. It reveals an entirely different attitude towards the confession. It is not merely a matter of 'quatenus' (the confession is accepted in as far as it agrees with Holy Scripture), but it is fully 'quia' (we accept this confession, because we heartily believe that it is in agreement with the Word of God).

The same appears from the third example mentioned by Barth in this same connection. From the introduction of the *Confessio Scotica* (1560) he quotes: "protestantes, quod si quis in hac nostra confessione articulum vel sententiam repugnantem sancto Dei verbo notaverit . . . promittimus Dei gratia ex Dei ore id est ex sacris scripturis nos illi satisfacturos aut correcturos, si quis quid erroris inesse probaverit."[21] It is hard to understand why Barth is quoting exactly this statement, for we can by no means find here a corroboration of Barth's view. We only find here the common Reformed view, according to which the confession has to be accepted and maintained, because it is held to be in agreement with the Word of God. The "Estaites of Scotland with the Inhabitants of the same" took their new confession as a representation of the truth revealed in the Word of God so seriously that beforehand they announced their preparedness to correct everything that might be proved to be contrary to Scripture (the latter without any hesitation called: the mouth of God: ex Dei ore). They did not want to leave the wrong statements in the confession, for they wanted a reliable confession, a confession which indeed was in conformity with the Word of God and therefore could be upheld as a true confession.

Also with regard to the contrast between spiritual authority and the authority of *Church law* Barth cannot appeal to the Reformation. Already in 1533 all those who wanted to graduate in Wittenberg, had to promise under oath not to teach anything against the three general creeds and the doctrine summarised in the Confession of Augsburg. In 1535, after the adventure of Munster (Anabaptists!) it became customary in North Germany

20. Cf. Ph. Schaff, **Creeds of Christendom**, III, 362.
21. C.D. I 2, 658.

that all the Lutheran ministers subscribed the Confessio Augustana and the Apologia. The same we find in Reformed circles. Well known is the fact that in Calvin's Geneva all the citizens had to swear to the confession. (The question whether this can be defended or not can be left out of consideration here. I think it is generally agreed now that a 'subscription' of this kind rests on a fatal confusion of the spiritual and the natural, of the Church and the State, and necessarily results in restraint of conscience.) We also refer to the custom of subscription of the confession by the ministers, as we find this in the 16th century in Holland and Scotland, to mention these countries only. At the Synod of Armentiers (the Southern Netherlands, now Belgium) in 1563 it was already decided to subscribe the Belgic Confession, which was repeated by other synods.[22] As to Scotland we read in Calderwood's History of the Kirk of Scotland that for example in 1587 the General Assembly in Session 9 resolved: "No maisters of colledges or schooles sall receave in their colledges or schooles, to teache, anie student or scholars being of maturitie of age, which refuse to subscribe to the true religiun presentlie established and professed by the mercie of God, within this realme, or refusing to participat the sacraments, under the paine of the censures of the kirk. And farther, before anie student be promoted to anie degree in the universitie, that they sall, toties quoties, as they sall be promote, subscrive de novo, otherwise their promotiouns to be stayed, under the paines foresaid; and that the presbyteries be diligent to see the execution of this act, as they will answere to God."[23] As a matter of fact at a much earlier date we hear already of subscription. In 1554 the first English congregation was formed on the Continent and was admitted to hold its services in the same Church as the congregation of the French-speaking exiles, on condition of using the same ceremonies and Confession of Faith as the French.[24] And then we read: "The ministers and other office-bearers accordingly signed the Confession of Faith along with those of the French congregation."

It cannot be denied that this picture is quite different from what Barth wants us to believe.

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Yet one point we want to investigate. It is the important question: what is the *background* of this view of Barth? And then the answer must be: The background of

22. H. Bouwman, **Gereformeerd Kerkrecht**, II, 566.
23. Op. cit. IV 628; cf. also for the following year 672.
24. Alex. F. Mitchell, **The Scottish Reformation**, 1890, 124 (cf. 294).

this whole conception is undoubtedly Barth's view on the Bible. In the beginning of this article we already mentioned our objection against the word "attested" in Barth's definition of the dogma. In this definition we read of "the revelation attested by Scripture."[25] Of course we do not object to the word "attested" as such. The Bible indeed 'attests' the divine revelation in Jesus Christ. But with Barth this word has a very special meaning.

It is not possible to give here a complete survey of *Barth's view on the Bible.* It must suffice to draw a few main lines. It is known that Barth makes a definite distinction between the divine revelation and the Bible as a book. Every identification of the two means a stabilisation of the revelation and is therefore an impairment of God's sovereignty. The revelation is never a datum, a depositum, of which man can dispose, but it is always an actus, it is the revealing God Himself. In his sovereign freedom God wants to use the Bible as the means that again and again becomes his Word, but as such it is a fallible, purely human book. Hence Barth's attitude to higher criticism. The same is indicated by the word 'attested.' The revelation is not identical with Holy Scripture, nor Holy Scripture with revelation, but Holy Scripture can again and again become revelation, just as the water of Bethesda again and again was stirred by God at his time.

It is clear that Barth's view on the dogma can never be isolated from this view on the Bible, but is strongly influenced and marked by it. When already the Bible itself is thus surrounded by reservations and limitations, how much more the dogma. Here the dogma can only be an attempt to formulate something of the gifted insight into the revelation, but it indeed can never be more than an attempt. Here Barth's own expression, "The Word of God is above dogma as the heavens are above the earth,"[26] becomes fully clear and appears to have a very wide scope.

The *Reformed confessions* — and this also holds for the Lutheran confessions — have quite a different view. To them the Bible is the Word of God without any reservation. Though they fully acknowledge the absolute freedom and sovereignty of God, they do not shrink back from positing a definite identity between the revelation of God and the factual Bible (without limiting all revelation to the Bible; in early days God has revealed far more than what we now find written in the Bible; God Himself made a definite selection to be fixed for the Church of all

25. C.D. I 2, 620.
26. C.D. I 1, 306, cf. 313.

ages). In my opinion it is Barth himself who derogates from the sovereignty of God. If it has pleased God to reveal himself infallibly in some writings, written under the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, why should we then be afraid of an impairment of his divine sovereignty? Can we not leave that to Him? Is his sovereignty not so great that He remains Lord of His own revelation, even in an inspired Bible? If sinful man thinks he can master God in and through his Word, he will only discover that he has mastered a self-created idol!

On the ground of the above-mentioned identity the Reformers could in a far more substantial way speak of the confession. They did not use expressions like Barth's "The Word of God is above dogma as the heavens are above the earth," but they dared to say, like Luther did in relation to the Articles of Schmalkald: "These are the articles on which I will and must stand to my death, if God will and I know not how to alter or yield ought therein. If any wish to concede ought, let him do so upon his own conscience." And with regard to the doctrine of justification he dared to declare: "Of this article nought can be conceded or withdrawn, though heaven and earth fall and all that doth not endure . . . On this article hangs all that we teach and live against the Pope, the devil and the world. Therefore we must be certain and not doubt."[27] Here we are on quite a different level than with Barth. Here we find a great certainty, grounded in the knowledge that the Word of God is the absolute truth, upon which the Church and the believer can build their faith. That does not mean that Luther made his formulation of the truth infallible. He surely was convinced of the fact that all human formulations are fundamentally fallible. But he no less was convinced that as long as it is not proved from the Word of God that the formulation of the confession is wrong, this formulation has to be accepted as an expression of the divine truth, and also that everyone, who deviates from this formulation, or better, from the formulated truth, is deviating from the Word of God.

Our *final conclusion* is: There is much to be appreciated in Barth's view. In many regards his view is a stimulus to new reflection. But also, in many regards it is not satisfactory and cannot give a solution to the present-day problems in connection with the Church's proclamation and therefore the Church's confession.

K. RUNIA.

27. Quoted by Barth himself C.D. I 2, 659.

# Book Reviews

## FAITH AND PERSEVERANCE.

By G. C. Berkouwer (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), 1958, pp. 256; $4.00.

This volume is the sixth of Professor Berkouwer's Studies in Dogmatics now available in English translation. At the same time it is the third and last of the three volumes which cover the so-called *Ordo Salutis* (though this concept itself has been rejected by the author in the first of the three: *Faith and Justification;* the second was: *Faith and Sanctification).*

Probably this volume will be the most pastoral of the whole series. To a certain extent this is rather natural, because of the nature of the subject under discussion. But we have to add immediately that it no less is due to the way in which the author deals with his subject. No doubt every minister will find much inspiration in this volume with regard to his sermons and pastoral activities.

At the same time, however, we find here a solid piece of Reformed theology. In this volume, too, Berkouwer shows himself a trustworthy guide, who is able to lead us through the theological labyrinth. For as to this doctrine there has been much controversy. After having shown in chapter 2 that all the Reformed confessions uphold and defend this doctrine, the author in chapter 3 points to three controversies in which Reformed theology has been involved. Successively he deals with the view of the Remonstrants (especially of the 17th century, but a similar view is held by the present-day Arminians), of Rome, and of the Lutherans. Especially the last controversy was (and is) very remarkable. While in the first two cases (though there are many differences among themselves!) this doctrine was rejected, because in both views man with his faith was conceived of as a more or less independent factor besides, even over against God, the Lutherans as well as the Reformed theologians wanted to maintain the *sola fide* in all its strength. The Lutherans therefore did not reject the assurance of salvation (what was done by both the Remonstrants and the Roman Catholics), and yet they could not accept the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. According to them this doctrine derogated from the reality of sin and fall in the lives of the believers.

In the following chapters the author enters into a thorough discussion of the problem and deals at length with the biblical message and with the various objections raised against this doctrine. How much this doctrine is related to the reality of life appears very clearly from the headings of these chapters: 4—Perseverance and Admonition; 5—Perserverance and Prayer; 6—Perserverance and Temptation; 7—The Consolation of Perseverance; 8—The Reality of Perseverance.

In our opinion the core of Berkouwer's own view is found in chapter 4, that deals with the relation between perseverance and admonition. Here we are at the centre of the whole problem and of all the controversies. It is a well-known fact that all the opponents of the doctrine of the perseverance always appeal to all the admonitions, which abound in Holy Scripture. According to them these admonitions are robbed of their force, if this doctrine is accepted. In answer to this Berkouwer in a very clear and clarifying way points out that the opponents in their conception proceed on the entirely unbiblical assumption that faith is a more or less independent factor on the subject side. Here man becomes the co-operator of God. In this way the admonitions are made independent over against God's sovereign grace. Berkouwer. however, shows that any idea of co-

operation here means a serious derogation from the divine sovereignty and a misrepresentation of the biblical revelation. Berkouwer himself replaces the word "co-ordination" by his favoured term "correlation" (104). Grace and faith are mutually related to each other, but in such a way that faith on all sides is taken up in the sovereign grace of God. "Preserving ourselves is not an independent thing that is added paradoxically to the divine preservation. God's preservation and our self-preservation do not stand in mere co-ordination, but in a marvellous way they are in correlation. One can formulate it best in this way: our preservation of ourselves is entirely oriented to God's preservation of us" (104). Berkouwer repeats this time and again. "Here (viz., in I Peter 1:4, 5) we observe the interrelatedness of faith and perseverance, i.e., that faith itself recognises that it is preserved in God's hand and holds fast to this preservation" (207). Also the texts which seem to speak of the real possibility of apostasy in the life of true believers have to be seen in the context of this correlation. "The entire message of the Scriptures is inseparably bound up with the living correlation between faith and God's grace. The Scriptures never reason about certainties and stabilities that can be abstracted from this faith" (107). Here the decisive thing has been said indeed. Yet we would have appreciated it if the author had discussed some difficult text more fully. Hebr. 6:4ff., e.g., is dealt with; it is placed in its context (boldness!), but it is not actually interpreted. We could also mention I Cor. 8:11, Rom. 11:20, 21, etc., which are even not mentioned.

From these short remarks, however, it is obvious already that this volume is to be recommended highly.

K. RUNIA.

## "FUNDAMENTALISM" AND THE WORD OF GOD.

Some Evangelical Principles. By J. I. Packer (Inter-Varsity Fellowship, London), 1958, pp. 191; 4/6.

Is this the first of the new Tracts for the Times we have been waiting for? If so, another "Second Spring" may be in the air, this time a renewal of evangelical piety and theology. For this book, small in size, but rich in content, persuasive in argument and, above all, pervaded by the freshness of a young spiritual movement, is a clarion call to the defeated and scattered sons of the Reformation to rally again around the Bible as the infallible Word of God. Its background is the new discussion of "Fundamentalism" in Britain caused by "Billy Graham's evangelistic crusades, the growth of evangelical groups in schools and universities, and the increase of evangelical candidates for the ministry" (p. 9). Dr. Packer clarifies the issue by discussing various misinterpretations of the movement even by such outstanding scholars as Archbishop Ramsey and especially Father Herbert to whose *Fundamentalism and the Church* this book is an answer. The new Evangelicalism does not want to be equated with American Fundamentalism which arose 50 years ago. This "Fundamentalism" in which great theologians like Warfield and Machen played a prominent role is regarded as "a recent chapter, now closing, if not already closed," of that Evangelicalism which appeared in 16th century Protestantism, in Puritanism and Methodism, and will continue in new forms. "We honour Fundamentalism for its witness at a time when militant Liberalism threatened to sweep the historic faith away. But we honour it best, not by perpetuating its weaknesses, but by frankly acknowledging them and taking pains to avoid them" (38). The theological argument is given in the chapters "Authority," "Scripture," "Faith," "Reason." The main problem underlying the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, the problem of authority, can

neither be solved by the "traditionalist view" which practically subordinates the Bible to the Church, nor by the "subjectivist position" which destroys the objective truth, but solely by the "evangelical view" whose basic principle is that "the teaching of the written Scriptures is the Word which God spoke and speaks to His Church and is finally authoritative for faith and life." "What Scripture says, God says." "The Bible is inspired in the sense of being word-for-word God given." It is sufficient and perspicuous. "The Holy Spirit, who caused it to be written, has been given to the Church to cause believers to recognise it for the divine Word that it is, and to enable them to interpret it rightly and to understand its meaning" (47). Such sentences sound strange to modern Protestants. However, before dismissing them one should carefully read what Dr. Packer says (pp. 54-64) on the teaching of Christ and His apostles. What Scripture is, must be learnt from what Scripture teaches about itself. The strongest point made against Dr. Hebert is that he "writes a complete book on 'Fundamentalism' without discussing at all the avowed biblicism of our Lord and His apostles, nor the biblical concepts of Scripture and of its authority" (144). The urgent plea made by the author in another context (144) when he quotes Cromwell writing to the Church of Scotland: "I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken," should be heeded by all modern Protestants, and especially by the representatives of "Neo-orthodoxy" or British "Biblical Theology." The chapter "Liberalism" puts really heart-searching questions to us all. The plea could have been made even stronger if the author had realised the development in the Roman Church since the Vatican Council whose statement on the authority of the Scriptures may prove in future to be of far greater importance than the dogma on the infallible magisterium of the pope which after all was nothing new and is only the Roman version of the infallibility of the Church. Since 1870 Rome, notwithstanding its errors, has been the guardian of the doctrine of the Church Universal, expressed in the New Testament, confirmed by the Nicene Creed ("Who spake by the prophets") and held by all orthodox Christians, that the Scriptures have to be accepted as sacred not because they have been approved by the authority of the Church, "and not only because they contain the revelation without error, but rather because they, having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have God as their author and as such have been given to the Church" (Denzinger 1787). The amazing work which has been dedicated by Roman Catholic theology to the doctrines of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible since Cardinal Newman's last essays were by-passed and the Modernist Movement had to be rejected now begins to bear fruit (see the documents collected in *Rome and the Study of the Scriptures* (a Grail Publication, St. Meinrad, Indiana). It is the greatest challenge to the churches of the Reformation in this "Post-Protestant age" of which American Protestants begin to speak. In this situation the present book and the movement it represents are most timely.

It must be left to our readers to see for themselves how the author successfully overcomes the limitations of the old Fundamentalism concerning nature: The Bible does not teach science. The book is not satisfactory when it comes to the problem of the inerrancy concerning history. In this respect the author does not quite do justice to a biblical scholar of the stature of Dr. Hebert, though he rightly rejects the alleged pseudonymity of the Pastorals. Dogmaticians and historians have to learn from each other and have to resist the temptation either to overcome history by dogma (as the Vatican dogma on the papacy was justified), or to overcome the dogma by history (as the Modernists did). Here lie the great tasks of the future which have

not yet been realised by the new movement. Dr. Packer does not see, to take one example, the problem of the canon. East and West have different canons. Even the apostles had two Bibles, for the Septuagint is not only a translation of our Hebrew text, and yet treated in the New Testament as the authoritative Word of God, even where it deviates from the Hebrew Bible (Acts 7!). The question whether the "antilegomena" like 2 Peter, which by the Reformation (at first even by Calvin) were regarded as deuterocanonical, are Holy Scripture cannot be answered by assuming that the Holy Spirit would not have allowed the Church to be misled in receiving them (p. 185). This would bring us perilously close to Rome. Here, as in other points, a lack of a detailed knowledge of the Reformers becomes manifest. What after all does "evangelical" mean if we share with Rome the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture, and if the sola scriptura could be taught even by good Catholics in the Middle Ages? Thus the new movement will have to go a long and stony road until it reaches the goal for which it is striving in a courageous and really promising way.

H. SASSE.

LUTHER'S WORKS, Vol. 1, Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1-5. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis), 1958; XII and 387 pp.; $5.00.

The lectures on Genesis which occupied Luther from 1535 to nearly the end of his life presented Dr. Pelikan with special problems of which he gives an account in the Preface. For "as we have it, the work is not a product of Luther's pen or even a transcript of his lectures; it is a transcript that has been reworked and edited." The Latin text is a reconstruction by Veit Dietrich, who shortly after Luther had started the lectures left for Nürnberg, mainly on the basis of notes taken by Cruciger and Roerer. The first volume appeared in 1545 with a preface by Luther. The later volumes, published long after the Reformer's death met already with criticisms on the part of strict Lutherans. Following the custom of that time Dietrich has allowed himself the freedom to improve the text which he found. As a disciple of Melanchthon he sometimes brought in thoughts of his master, e.g., a qualified defense of astrology contradicting other passages in which Luther's outright rejection of that "shabby art" has been retained. While in this and similar cases the facts could be clarified, there remains the question how far the theology of these lectures has been melanchthonized. The overstatements made in that direction in a scholarly monograph by P. Meinhold are corrected by the well-balanced judgment of Dr. Pelikan who regards the text on the whole as a reliable presentation of Luther's theology. It must be added that the lectures on Genesis contain some of the greatest sections of the Reformer's theological life-work which are in complete harmony with the theologia crucis of the young Luther.

Another problem was presented by the nature of these lectures of which Luther speaks in the preface to the first volume. Unfortunately this touching document, dated on Christmas 1544, in which he seems to take leave from his life-work has not been included in this edition. It would have made clear why these lectures are not a commentary as we would understand it. It was never intended for publication. "Everything has been said extempore and in a popular way, just as the words flowed into the mouth." As regards the exegetical details, everything has been taken over from Nicholas of Lyra's Postil on the O.T. from Genesis to Chronicles (1492), who again transmits the traditional material from the schoolmen and Fathers. Luther's work

was the selection of the material, the strong emphasis on the literal sense, the vivid description of persons which reminds one of the altar paintings of the late Middle Ages, and the profound theological interpretation of individual passages. That means that these lectures cannot be used to-day as a commentary proper, since we cannot accept mediaeval explanations of words and names, or the views of the Middle Ages on geography, biology, and astronomy (e.g., the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic geocentric view of the universe), or the idea of an absolute time. As the Bible does not reveal to us nature, but God the Creator, so Luther does not teach science, but theology.

If this is kept in mind, the present volume will be of utmost importance to any theologian. The problems mentioned have been solved by footnotes and cross references and by quotations from the Fathers and schoolmen and especially from the almost inaccessible Postil by Lyra. The index is excellent. A great improvement which should be adopted also in reprints of former volumes is the constant reference to the pages of the Weimar Edition. Editor and Publisher must be highly commended for the great achievement which this volume means. The English translation of Luther's Latin by Prof. George V. Schick of St. Louis is a masterpiece, as far as the reviewer is able to judge.

H. SASSE.

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE.

By Ian T. Ramsey (S.C.M. Press, London), 1957, pp. 191; 18/-.

This is a book to be heartily welcomed. Its author is Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian religion in the University of Oxford — a University which has been the centre of British philosophical discussion on the logical analysis of language. Theologians have for long treated the whole movement with great suspicion, but now the "ice is breaking," as Professor Ramsey would say. Professor Ramsey knows his way round in theology; and at the same time he is completely at home in the Oxford linguistic discussions. The result is a most competent, provocative and instructive book which will exercise considerable influence on the whole discussion for some time.

Professor Ramsey begins by showing that there are certain situations in which we find ourselves faced at once with a unique disclosure and a total commitment. For these situations, language is used whose behaviour is logically "odd" (a word which appears very frequently in Professor Ramsey's pages) when compared with its use in more normal situations. But, Professor Ramsey argues, it is precisely this logical misbehaviour that makes such language "appropriate currency" for religious use — that is, makes it the instrument of a unique disclosure and a total commitment. In succeeding chapters it is shown just how religious language is used in this way, how a "model" like "Father" is linked with a "qualifier," "eternal," to produce a phrase which will be religiously significant because its unusual logic fits it for indicating the nature and claim of God without its pretending to be a straight-forward description of Him.

The discussion of the language of the Bible which is the content of Chapter 3 will be found both illuminating and debatable: there is a much-needed treatment of Dodd's "Fact-plus-interpretation" doctrine of the Biblical history, and some highly ingenious (in some cases not much more) treatments of particular examples. The concluding chapter deals with the language of Christian Doctrine and makes the important suggestion that the Chalcedonian formulae are not so much descriptions of metaphysical entities as rules for appropriate speech about the God of Christian revelation. Professor Ramsey writes, "We sympathise with Augustine's view that doctrine only 'fences a mystery'" (p. 172).

There is much quiet humour throughout the book. "The early Christological and Trinitarian controversies are wrongly seen if they are thought to be concerned with superscientific discoveries about God, as though the Early Fathers had some special high-powered telescope by which to inspect the Godhead; or as though they had discovered, for the benefit of posterity, that to ring CHAlcedon 451 would invariably give us an up-to-date report on heavenly events" (p. 173). But there is much more than that: "Christian doctrine will never give us a blueprint of God. It will talk of God as best it can, but never in terms of more than models, metaphors, key-ideas and the rest . . . in particular, the language of Christian doctrine is likely to bristle with improprieties" (p. 164). Professor Ramsey's defence of these improprieties is impressive and encouraging, and will assist theology towards a clarification of its language.

F. W. R. NICHOL.

## THE SCROLLS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Edited by Krister Stendahl (S.C.M. Press Ltd., London), 1958, pp. xii, 308; 35/-.

Unduly flattering is the claim on the dust-cover that the fourteen papers in this mixed collection, garnered from various theological journals and in some instances translated from an original German or Latin, "provide a well-grounded interim verdict on the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the main departments of New Testament studies." Rather will the essays display to the reader who takes a little extra care to check references, especially in their contexts, just how insignficant for Christianity are the repercussions from the discovery and interpretation of the scrolls as here presented. The "verdict" is secured from evidence in the form of alleged parallels in language and ideas, distant verbal resemblances and remote allusions being strung together and supported by arguments more speculative than sound.

The editor's introductory assertion of "universal agreement" that "the Dead Sea Scrolls add substantially to our knowledge of the Jewish background of Christianity" can be treated merely as wishful thinking. Not only is there lack of "universal agreement" among scholars upon important prior questions such as the dating of the scrolls, and the unity of the various writings, and the community to which they belong, but the essays in this volume offer among themselves many flat contradictions.

Two samples may be given of the superficiality that pervades most of the essays. K. G. Kuhn writes on "The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel," a phrase which he finds in the Manual of Discipline. But surely the title begs the question at the outset in rendering the original "anointed ones" numerically and technically as "two Messiahs." Then for this "concept of the two Messiahs, a priestly and a political one," support is wrested from other Qumram writings and from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. Notwithstanding the admitted fact that this is the only passage either in the Scrolls or in the Testaments where there is a plural reference, the thesis of "two Messiahs" is maintained by a bold but simple expedient: each occurrence of the overwhelmingly preponderant singular form throughout Scrolls and Testaments is arbitrarily emended to bring it into agreement with the solitary plural.

In his essay on "The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline and the Jerusalem Church in Acts," Sherman E. Johnson finds much that is reminiscent of "the Qumram sect" in Acts. Typical is his observation that "the Jerusalem church and the Qumram sect led lives of communal sharing." There seems little point in this observation and

its questionable development when silence is maintained regarding inconvenient details. In the Manual, the initiant, at the end of his first year's probation, must hand over his property to the care of an official and, it is specifically stated, his belongings are not to be dispersed for the general benefit. At the end of his second year, it may be implied, but it is not stated, his property is regarded as common, for the successful candidate is then allotted his order of rank in the community and his share of the common funds. The vivid contrast of the spontaneity of Acts to this strictly regulated procedure seems to present little in the way of reminiscence. "Noteworthy," too, in comparison with the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, is said to be the provision in the Manual of punishment for a member who lies about his wealth. Again the worth of the comparison disappears when the Manual is consulted: the offender is put on three-quarter rations for a year.

All the notes are inconveniently relegated to the end of the volume; but useful indexes are provided of authors and of passages from the Qumram Literature and the New Testament. Typographical errors abound.

STEWART PETRIE.

## COMMUNISM AND THE THEOLOGIANS.

Study of an Encounter, by Charles West (S.C.M. Press, London), 1958, pp. 399; 35/-.

This is a very valuable and important book which should be in the hands of everyone who seeks to understand the situation of the Christian Church to-day in face of the challenge of Communism. Dr. West, who is Assistant Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, does not aim at giving an analysis of Communism, its theory and practice. That has been done often enough. Nor is he concerned to defend Christendom. The easy condemnation of Communism and the tendency to identify Christianity with Western Civilisation have been the great weaknesses of Christians confronted with a revolutionary movement which offers the gravest challenge to the Christian faith since the rise of Islam. This attitude is really a refusal to come to grips with Communism or to try to understand the issues it raises. The day for this is past. Fortunately, in the past quarter of a century there have been a number of Christian thinkers who have reached a deeper understanding of the nature of the Communist challenge and taken up a new attitude towards it. "The greatest discovery Christians have made is their complete solidarity with a world which has lost its self-confidence in a revolutionary age, and their complete freedom to be open for what God is doing that they may bear witness to it. This book is the story of this Christian discovery, in the face of the challenge of Communism, and of the ministry to the world, including the Communists, which flows from it" (pp. 12-13). Five major theologians are brought under review — Brunner, Hromadka, Tillich, Niebuhr and Barth — and the insights into various aspects of Communism offered by Berdyaev, Bonhoeffer and Gollwitzer are also drawn upon. There is much to be learned from each of these, and Dr. West is a sure guide through their writings. One of these theologians, Josef Hromadka, is of special interest as representative of the Christians who have to live and bear their witness within a Communist society. In him we see, as Dr. West brings out so clearly, the influence of the political situation on one's theological thinking. But, what is more important and more salutary for us, we may also see from Hromadka's criticisms how deeply, though usually unconsciously, tinged by social and political considerations our own theology is. In Dr. West's view the two out-

standing interpreters of Christianity in face of the Communist challenge are Karl Barth, to whom he devotes over a third of his exposition, and Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr's interest in Communism is rooted in the practical problems of the Ford workers in Detroit in the 'twenties, the urban proletariat in the 'thirties and in the dilemmas and responsibilities of the U.S.A. as a great power in the post-war years. This is at once his strength and his weakness. On the critical side he is strongly and soundly based, but he is much less helpful when we seek to find a positive and constructive approach to the problem of Communism and the communist. Barth's influence is primarily theological and no one, according to Dr. West, has given so adequate an answer to the problem raised by the Marxist doctrine of ideology. This answer rests on the great truth which is the central theme of Barth's theological work, the conviction of the complete centrality of Christ as the measure and source of all that is human. This section on Barth is not only the longest but also the most valuable in Dr. West's exposition, giving, as it does, a wealth of quotations from Barth's as yet untranslated volumes. The final chapter, in which Dr. West gathers together the fruits of the study of these diverse thinkers, deserves the closest and most careful attention. In it he lays down the lines on which a fruitful theological encounter with Marxism may be reached and emphasises afresh his fundamental theme, that the Christian answer to Communism will only be found through an encounter over the whole area of our common life. This is not an easy book but it is a very important one and quite indispensible to all who would understand the major problem of our age.

JOHN HENDERSON.

## THE INDEPENDENTS IN THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR.

By George Yule (Cambridge University Press: Melbourne University Press), 1958, pp. 156; 30/-.

Like many a modern novel, the title of this book gives little clue as to what it covers. Its subject-matter is not the activities of the Independents in the conduct or direction of the English Civil War. Instead Professor Yule is concerned to elucidate the much more technical question: who were "the Independents" — bearing the name of a religious group — whom historians have so often taken for granted as one of the political forces of Puritan England?

It is first necessary to determine who were the religious Independents. Professor Yule points out the very important distinction between the Separatist or Brownist on the one hand and the Independent on the other. This distinction has been obscured by the fact that modern Congregationalism is descended from both Brownist and Independent. Further it has been largely ignored not only by secular historians, but also by some Congregationalists when writing on the past of their own denomination.

Religious Independency is shown to have been a relatively small movement up to 1650; and, even thereafter, at no time prior to the Restoration did it, at the very outside, account for more than one quarter of the strength of the Presbyterians. This had a very significant bearing on political Independency which was a composite movement with conservative and radical wings composed of genuine religious Independents, those with Independent inclinations who were unable to satisfy them until about 1650, gentry who desired a "bishopless Eden" without replacing episcopacy by any other system, politicians who had gone too far to turn back, and, lastly, republicans. These all tended from conviction or expediency to support a considerable measure of religious toleration. Hence, as against the Presbyterian party, there

has been a tendency to regard toleration as providing the bond of union of the Independents. However, Professor Yule points out that it is necessary to remember that Vane and other Independents negotiated the Solemn League and Covenant with the Scots.

The volume represents a very distinct contribution to the investigation upon which it embarks, and, in addition, provides scholarly and balanced criticisms of other attempts to explain the significance of the Independent party.

There are three extremely valuable appendices, which extend in all to 74 pages, and a bibliography.

The chief defect of the book is the absence of an index — an omission which two experienced publishers of learned works should never have allowed to happen. "Any sizeable contribution to knowledge . . . is the better for an index . . . Its absence is much more often deplorable than its presence is superflous" — *Making an Index,* G. V. Carey (Cambridge U.P.), p. 3.

F. MAXWELL BRADSHAW.

## SHORTER NOTICES.

*Religions,* by D. W. Gundry (Macmillan, London, 26/6 Aust.). After preliminary consideration as to the nature and origin of religion, this historical and theological survey discusses in some detail the extinct religions of the ancient world and then the living monistic religions of the East and the monotheistic religions of the West. Although the writer appears to regard the Christian faith as *sui generis,* his discussion often moves in the atmosphere of the *religionsgeschichteschule* in regarding Christianity as one religion among others from which the Church may borrow such features as will add to her riches. The main value of the volume will be found in its succinct and informative summaries of the most important non-Christian faiths.

*The Deeper Faith,* by Gordon Girod, and *We Are the Lord's,* by Jean Vis (Reformed Publications, 1819 Newton Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, $2.50 each). The first of these books presents a useful popular exposition of the Canons of Dort, the text of which in the abridged form of the positive articles is inserted in the concluding chapter. The second and larger volume embodies a stimulating and lucid commentary, written in terse style, on the Heidelberg Catechism. The author, whilst criticising the proportions of the Catechism in devoting only two questions to the Word and fifteen to the Sacraments, surprisingly suggests that the Communion Sermon may be well omitted. Again, whilst pointedly asserting that "'All men are sons of God' is a statement that contains a grain of truth and a mountain of heresy" (44), he strangely asserts with reference to the Lord's Prayer that "in Matthew all the multitude was taught to pray and not just the disciples" (157). These are, however, minor blemishes in a sound yet refreshing exposition of this notable Reformed symbol.

*All the Men of the Bible,* by Herbert Lockyer (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, $4.95). Cyclopaedic in its range this unusual book gives in alphabetical order a separate entry (with the pronouncement and meaning of names) to the more than 3,000 Biblical male characters. Information as to the great majority of these named men is very limited, being usually based on one Scriptural citation, but the hundreds of more prominent personalities are given discriminatingly concise biographical and character studies. In a work of such compass, not surprisingly, there are occasional misstatements; e.g., James, the son of Zebedee "never sought fame, power, a great name" (169). However, this is a valuable source book which, already in its second edition a month after its original publication in September, 1958, will prove of great use as a ready reference especially for sermon preparation.

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*Children of the Reformation* and *A Goodly Heritage,* by Marian M. Schooland (Eerdmans, $2.75 and $2.00). In a popular manner the first volume traces the history of the virile Christian Reformed Church in North America which originated amongst the Dutch migrants with a Secession background in Michigan in 1857. It is of interest to note that Grand Rapids, the denominational pivot, has become a great publishing centre, the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. being, amongst others, now the leading publishers of religious books in America. The second book embodies a short biography of the writer's father, a Hollander who became one of the first professors at Calvin College. These two publications, complementing one another, give an attractive and vivid picture of the Calvinism of the Netherlands as transplanted to the New World.

*Archaeology and the Pre-Christian Centuries* and *The Unity and Disunity of the Church* (Eerdmans, $1.50 each). The first of these new Pathway Books, a continuance of the author's *Archaeology and the Old Testament,* covers the centuries from the Exile to Herod the Great, the greater part being therefore given to the Persian and Greek periods. A chapter, with a balanced appraisal on Qumran is included. With its companion volume this provides a most commendable introduction to archaeological discovery in its relationship to Hebrew history. In the second book, Dr. Bromiley, an Evangelical Anglican, approaching his subject christologically, advocates a wide mutual recognition of ministries and concludes that "the integration must come, as it can and should, out of the enduring functions which are greater than the relative forms in which they now find their varied expression" (97). Whilst many will not be convinced by the line of argument, all may benefit from a serious endeavour to grapple with basic concepts.

*The Lord from Heaven,* by Leon Morris (I.V.F., 4/- and Eerdmans $1.50). This contains a concise study on the *vere Deus, vere homo* as constituting the two great truths in the N.T. teaching on the person of Christ. The exposition is marked by insight and clarity. E.g., re Col. 1:15, "Paul's point is that Christ stands to every creature in the relation of the first-born to his father's property, i.e., He is the heir" (70). Based on solid scholarship, this small book will serve as a reliable guide to the general reader.

*Liturgical Renewal,* by J. D. Benoit, and *Confession,* by Max Thurian (S.C.M., 10/6 and 8/6). Professor Benoit, of Strasbourg, discusses certain developments in the Reformed and Roman Catholic Churches, especially in France, and concludes, inter alia: "After having for long subordinated the Sacrament to the Word, the Reformed Churches are rediscovering the true value of the Sacrament. The Roman Catholic Church, after having for long subordinated the Word to the Sacrament, is rediscovering in its turn the true value of the Word" (93). Pastor Thurian, of Taize, considers the theory and practice of confession in Scripture and history (especially with the Reformers), and, having related the subject to the advent of psycho-analysis, urges the recognition of absolution as a sacrament in the Reformed Churches. Written with an obvious affinity of outlook, aiming at ecumenicity, these two additions to the series "Studies in Ministry and Worship," will be provocative of thought and discussion, although their general theses will give rise to serious reservations in many quarters.

*Calvin's Commentaries,* edited by Joseph Haroutunian in collaboration with L. P. Smith (S.C.M., 35/-). These theologically classified selections from the Biblical Commentaries of the Reformer, translated into modern English idiom, endeavour "to show his concern with literary and historical questions, his understanding of Scripture both as Word of God and as a human document, his constant preoccupation

with the upbuilding of the Church" (14). The volume will serve a most useful purpose not only in presenting in short compass the thorough and lucid qualities of Calvin as an exegete, but also in encouraging the further study of the Commentaries alongside The Institutes for an adequate understanding of the theology of the Reformer. A discerning introduction by the Editor enhances the value of this judicious selection.

R. Swanton.

*New Testament Greek,* An Introductory Grammar, by Eric G. Jay (S.P.C.K., 21/-), aims at a happy medium between the inadequate elementary Grammar and the advanced Grammar which assumes too much. Along with declensions and conjugations arranged in progressive stages to lighten the unavoidable labour of learning by heart, quite a large amount of syntax is given. Explanations, even of the simplest constructions, are full and lucid, and there are frequent examples taken chiefly from Mark because this is often the student's first reading book. An interesting feature, which should appeal to the conscientious worker, is that the exercises contain more sentences for translation into Greek than into English. There are gathered into appendices a full summary of declensions and paradigms, as well as other important matters; and there is an English-Greek Vocabulary, a Greek Index, and an Index of Subjects. The pleasing clarity of type, both English and Greek, is worthy of remark. The book, which is the work of a practising teacher, deserves commendation as a valuable aid to the study of New Testament Greek.

*When the Time had Fully Come,* by Herman N. Ridderbos (Eerdmans, $1.50). This is the third volume in Pathway Books, a series of contemporary evangelical studies designed to keep teachers, students, preachers and laymen informed on crucial themes. Here are five chapters on important aspects of New Testament theology: the Kingdom of God according to the Witness of the Synoptic Gospels; the Significance of the Sermon on the Mount; the Redemptive-Historical Character of Paul's Preaching; the Law of God in Paul's Doctrine of Salvation; History of Redemption and the Scriptures of the New Testament. Some acquaintance with current theological jargon will help the reader, but he will find, besides constructive criticisms of many popular ideas, much sound and helpful exposition.

*Jesus' Promise to the Nations,* by Joachim Jeremias. Studies in Biblical Theology No. 24 (S.C.M. Press, 7/6). This is an examination of the relation of Jesus to the Gentiles, and so of the basis of missionary activity. Part I submits three negative conclusions: Jesus condemned the current Jewish missionary zeal; during His lifetime He forbade His disciples to preach to non-Jews; and He limited His own activity to Israel. Part II sets out three positive conclusions: Jesus removes the nationalistic idea of revenge from the hope of redemption; He promises the Gentiles a share in salvation; His redeeming work includes the Gentiles in its scope. Part III proposes to resolve the contradiction, starting from Matthew 8:11, Luke 13:29, where "we have a succinct summary of the Old Testament utterance concerning the eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles to the Mount of God at the time of the Last Judgment." Part IV tersely draws conclusions for the modern missionary task. This interesting speculative study seems to be unduly burdened by the precarious application of texts.

*More New Testament Words,* by William Barclay (S.C.M. Press, 10/6), follows the lines of the earlier volume which was noticed in this *Review* (Vol. XV, No. 2, June 1956). It consists of twenty-four studies previously published in the *British Weekly,* and will receive a deserved welcome by those who have the first Wordbook. This time there are fewer words treated, but there are more pages altogether.

Agape (love), Eusebeia (true religion), Logos (word), are among the important terms expounded at greater length. In language that all may understand, and constantly mindful of the implications for daily living, Dr. Barclay offers scholarly guidance for a deeper understanding of the New Testament. Preachers and teachers, as well as those "ordinary readers" who are chiefly in mind, will find enrichment in these pages. C. S. Petrie.

*The Whole Gospel for the Whole World,* by Alan Walker (Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 3/6). This work on evangelism is highly commended by both Dr. W. E. Sangster, sometime Minister of Westminster Chapel, London, and Dr. H. W. K. Mowll, the late Primate of Australia. It is a record of the Mission to the Nation conducted by the Methodist Church in Australia, and the author's reflections on that Mission. Some of the observations on the secularism of Australian life are disturbing. Why is it that people came in far greater numbers to meetings held in secular buildings (on "neutral" ground) than to services held in churches? Why is it that 50% of Australians will not enter church premises? The weakness of this book lies in the author's inability to distinguish between evangelism and social witness. Social witness may be a consequence of evangelism: but men are converted by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, and not by the claims of the Church to be either "perfectionist" or "reformist." S. Barton Babbage.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

(Mention here neither precludes nor implies subsequent comment).

Basil Blackwell, Oxford: *The First Epistle of Peter* (2nd ed.), F. W. Beare, 41/6 (Aust.).

Church Press, Grand Rapids: *The Lord's Prayer,* Henry Bast, $1.50; *Why We Baptise Infants,* Albertus Pieters, $0.40.

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids: *God's River* (Exposition of Romans 5:1-11), Donald Grey Barnhouse, $3.50; *The Glorious Body of Christ,* R. B. Kuiper, $4.95.

George Allen & Unwin, London: *The Latter Prophets,* T. Henshaw, 30/-; *The Letters of Luke the Physician,* Roger Lloyd, 12/6.

Presbyterian & Reformed, Philadelphia: *The Conflict with Rome,* G. C. Berkouwer, $5.95.

Reformed Publications, Grand Rapids: *The Reformed Pulpit* (vol. I), Various Authors, $2.00; *What is Christian Baptism?,* M. Eugene Osterhaven, $0.50.

S.C.M., London: *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament,* Alan Richardson, 30/-; *The Christian Message and Myth,* L. Malevez, 25/-; *A Guide to the Scrolls,* Nottingham Studies, 8/6; *Healing and Salvation,* Dorothee Hoch, 6/-.

S.P.C.K., London: *The Making of Luke-Acts* (2nd ed.), Henry J. Cadbury, 18/6; *Fundamentals of Faith,* J. E. L. Oulton, 12/6.

Tyndale, London: *Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology,* D. J. Wiseman, 12/6; *The First Evangelical Bishop* (Some Aspects of the Life of Henry Ryder), G. C. B. Davies, 1/6; *Daniel's Vision of the Son of Man,* E. J. Young, 1/6.

Zondervan, Grand Rapids: *The Amplified New Testament,* $3.95; *This Way to Happiness* and *Tell Your Children About Sex,* C. M. Narramore, $2.95 and $2.00; *Hobby Fun,* Eleanor Doan, $1.00; *The Years That Count,* Rosalind Rinker, $2.00; *My Three Years Inside Russia,* by Comrade X, $2.00.

## CORRIGENDUM

Vol. XVII, No. 3, page 72, line 3 from bottom (in *Hexaemeron,* by Dr. H. Sasse), for "him" substitute "those who believe in Him."

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